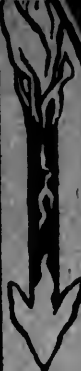


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ANAË
BLIND
AMYRIS



BY T STURGE
MOORE



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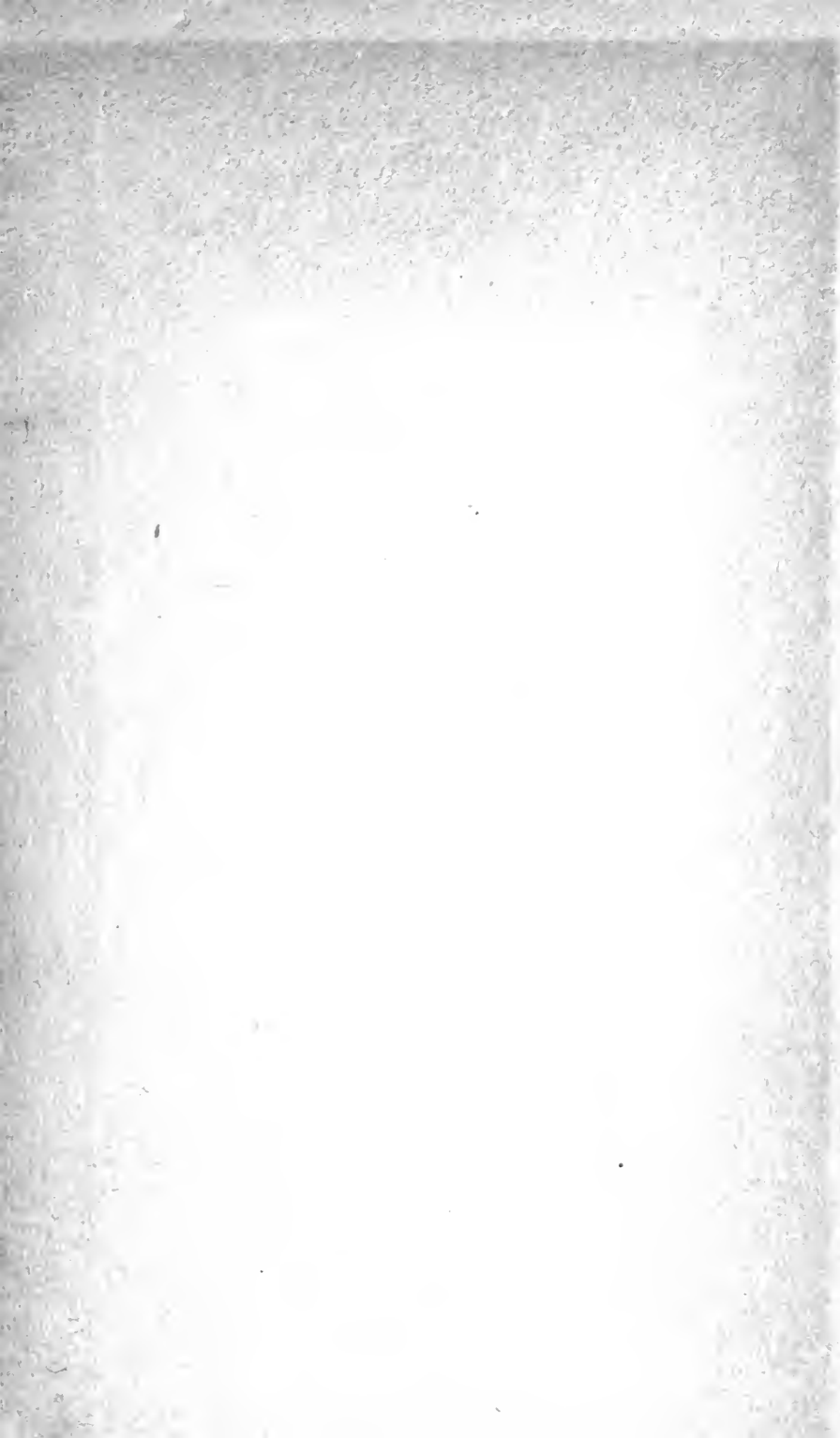


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**DANAË
AFORETIME
BLIND THAMYRIS**

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

POETRY

1899. THE VINEDRESSER AND OTHER POEMS

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1903. ABSALOM

1903. DANAË*

1905. THE LITTLE SCHOOL

1906. POEMS

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PROSE

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1910. ART AND LIFE (FLAUBERT AND BLAKE)

1915. HARK TO THESE THREE

1919. SOME SOLDIER POETS

1920. THE POWERS OF THE AIR

***FIRST PUBLISHED IN THE DIAL MDCCCXCIII
SECOND EDITION ENLARGED MCMIII
THE POEM HAS BEEN AGAIN REVISED FOR
THE PRESENT VOLUME**

**DANAË
AFORETIME
BLIND THAMYRIS
BY
T. STURGE
MOORE**

NEW EDITION
REVISED
BY THE AUTHOR

**GRANT RICHARDS LTD
EIGHT ST MARTIN'S STREET
LONDON MDCCCCXX**

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THE STORY

A daughter was born to Acrisius, king of Argolis, and called Danaë, and taken to the temple of Zeus as the custom would have it done. There those who had brought her, having made an offering, awaited an oracle, when pronouncement was made to this effect : that the son of this child should slay her father. Now Acrisius was no king by nature ; no, not so much as a brave man is ; he, therefore, thinking to prevent Fate, determined to immure his daughter, and, by the time that she was weaned, had raised a tower of brass, so strong that it might never be broken into, so smooth that it might never be scaled, and so high that his daughter was reared in the top of it beyond the reach of any man. There, then, she was reared with no attendance save that of a single crone, who, as youthful poets know, like all old women had but one subject to converse upon, namely the scandals of love ; now this one had been under such penalties forbidden her, that, as a companion, she was little better than a hen. Danaë's mother was so slightly considered that it is not known whether she died in giving birth to her, or, if not, in what manner she supported the tyranny of her husband. Nevertheless the Will that is Love hated the selfish cowardice of Acrisius and chose the child that she might live immaculate and yet become a happy mother, in order that the blessedness of that state might be made known, as also the nobleness of the issue born out of purity. For this was the mother of that Perseus, whose quoit hurled to an incredible distance, by accident, as had been prophesied, broke open the head of his cruel grandsire ; after which just misfortune, he slew the monstrous Gorgon and delivered Andromeda from a Sea-Dragon, beside being more beautiful and doing more heroic actions than it is easy to bear in mind. Zeus then, the Will that is Love, the Power that is Light, prepared everything, and in due time, laid siege to that tower, assaulted it and set it at naught. Thereafter without affright, without loss of innocence, without violence, shame, or any awk-

wardness, without the never-to-be-wholly-avoided trifling of courtship, but only once bathed naked and amorphous in pure sunshine, the virgin conceived and bare a son. Whereupon Acrisius in a very great panic, thinking it a miracle or worse, sent her to sea in an open chest, her baby with her ; but Light is over the sea and Love findeth a path across the widest ocean ; nor was she ever in danger, but without fear found both haven and home in Seriphos, where she brought up her son as holily as she ought. This is the story "such as youthful poets dream on summer eves by haunted stream," and the poem like such dreams has no fixed order or progress, but begins and begins again, and is broken off rather than ended. May this Danaë make happy friends with as innocent a maiden and as blessed a mother in thy mind also, gentle Reader.

DANAË

*Of the
tower's
siege by
golden
light and
of Danaë's
swoon*

Still, brilliant with bright brass, the tower derides
The sun's gold shafts ; which strike, and on all sides
Like ridicule-lit laughter, spread ; and some
In bravery bend back whence they have come,
And try their strength with those that come direct,
With first impetuous potency unchecked,
From the god's bow. For this the heat is great
O'er all the land of Argolis of late.
The king, Acrisius, hopes his tower may prove
Impregnable to liquid light and love,
Rolled round it in a golden ocean-tide
Whose ebb is a June night : and so all dried
And dusty have the ways become ; the fields
They wind among, with grain a rich soil yields
Should glow, not thus discover to the eye,
Between straws lank and earless, what cracks lie
And lengthen snake-like on the brittle earth.
Light in excess stifles her nursling mirth :
Old Inachus, most like a fevered wretch,
Who on his hot bed scarce hath strength to stretch,
Doth, round stones limping, feebly seaward crawl :
While in the tower-top Danaë small,
Unconscious how a god toward her steals
Across her prison-floor, lies numbed : nor feels
His burning kiss the hand he reaches first ;
But swooned amort, with sweat her brow has burst ;
While parted lips show teeth like maids in bower,
Where past them no sweet breath hath stirred this hour.

*Of her
father's
folly*

An oracle had Zeus, the king of heaven,
On this Acrisius' fond petition given :
" By the unintending hand of thy new-born
And infant daughter's son shalt thou be torn
From life and power : till he that age attain
When young men take to quoits first, live and reign ! "
This silly king was filled with hope at once
To outwit Zeus, which proved him but a dunce
His daughter he from all men straight immured,
And deemed himself from grandsons thus secured.

Leaves lap and overlap, and trees ; the lily,
 Deep-delled and fragile, grows up very stilly :
 So silken shade and shawls of varied hue
 Hid Danaë who whiter daily grew :
 When moulds the potter on his whirling wheel
 Dumb clay, a hint of final curves will steal
 From clever hands in sapience sure ; just so
 Quaint querulous suggestions of a flow
 Of contour simpler, more capacious, slips
 From God's thumb when he moulds a woman's hips.
 Her thighs will lengthen faster than they round,
 Till their delightful devious line be found.
 The heels, too narrow, of the little feet
 Will give her steps a wayward wavering sweet.
 As when, unpropped, the heavy dahlias stoop,
 Her head nods, nods, and even her spirits droop ;
 For nothing saw she, save her room's few things,
 Beside the well-conned window-view ; and brings
 Each year no increase to her life's thin store
 Of sights—the only one not known before,
 A larger loveliness, that might be found
 By searching the great mirror's polished round :
 This had advent so imperceptible
 It dwelt unnoticed there ; and yet, whimsful,
 She loved to view—no soil or levity
 In her fresh silent mind—naked and free
 Her beauty ;—purely, with no least alloy
 Of flurrying shame that hindered to enjoy ;
 Nor vain at all, since she had never seen
 Eyes like to those which modest maidens screen
 Themselves from, neither knew that any girls
 There were less fair than she, or who wore curls
 Less copious or of poorer purple sheen
 On lustre-lacking black. Oft would she lean
 As through a thunder-rain, while combing it,
 Nor then alone before her mirror sit ;
 For when—cool after washing with well-water,
 That up the winding stair nurse daily brought her,—
 She gravely sat to musingly commune
 With her companion-self a June forenoon,

*Of her
 body's
 growth
 and its
 changing
 beauty
 and of
 sisterly
 love for
 the reflec-
 tion of
 that
 beauty in
 her
 mirror*

To see so grave her gentle image brood
Within its round, that pensiveness renewed,
Which, on the wane, bright health had nigh dispersed ;
Yet, though in reverie still deep immersed,
To gain a smile's return sometimes she smiled ;
And from her nurse's knee she, oft beguiled
When little, by the bright resemblance to
Her young glad life, had tottered towards the new
Espied child, whose fresh rosy limbs resembled
Love's own in their deep-dimpled mould, that trembled
Within the mirror's glimmering polished deeps,—
So at the foot of forest trees there peeps
A sky cross-framed that laughs to recognise
Another blue. And, though she now knew better,
She would not slight her double nor forget her,
But smiled, and Half-deception friendly-wise
Lingered, though hands no longer patted pleased
To meet their chubby twins as when she, seized
With love, bunched up her lips to meet the lips
Out-thrust to them ; still no experience strips
(Though silver disks may give one the cold shoulder,
And though a dozen years must leave one older)
That veil, with child-dreams broidered, from her head ;
Still someway separate existence led
The twin, and not so much more silent, sister
With her up-grown. Not once had she yet missed her,
As slow their earliest dimpled limbs discovered
Most gradual change, and winsome sparseness hovered
Waywardly peeping out till plumpness went :
O'er salient points a certain tightness lent
A peevish pinched appearance ; in sight too
Their shoulder-blades moved looselier ; a new
Sly meagreness thus crept o'er them : like shoots
They sprouted up to taller growth : as roots
Sent down into dark mould, grew whiter daily.
Strange inner effervescence sparkled gaily
Out through their eyes. Yea thus they grew and grew,
And many a frock is old that once was new,
And skirt too short that had been long enough,
While thin and faded wears the patterned stuff,

Till hardly can she picture up its air
When first she put it on and found it fair
Upon her sister, who with pretty grace
Held it out wide within the mirror's face.

Can we now turn our crowding thoughts away
From those sweet days ?—the heart misgives us, nay !
But linger o'er the lovely ; soon, full soon,
The morning hours lose charm and it is noon.

Though every week her clothes are borne away
Soiled, crumpled, limp, wait seven days and they
Come back clean, smooth and neatly folded : so
Slumber each night renews her. Thus time's flow
Seems nothing, till she find two sandals small
Far back within a cupboard on the wall,
And hardly can believe that they were hers ;
Then laughs for how the mirror-sister stares
At tiny sandals there. Thus lived they on
Most silent happy twins, almost alone
And yet not quite ; for deep through polished walls,
Inhabiting adjacent dimmer halls,
That gleamed like vague perspectives 'neath a lake
Mid water-lily stems, and half-awake
Dusky or silvered fish, what ghost ? What shade
Of hazier gaze ? What dreamier shyer maid ?
Or was it ghosts ? (vague as her sister fades
When her breath dims the mirror) ghosts of maids ?
Friends ? or one magic gliding friend that there
Walks as they walk, more distant combs her hair ?
The mirror held whom most a sister seemed
Yet sometimes of this other had she dreamed,
Who still was seen through that part of the wall
Whither her gaze was turned—wimpled a shawl,
Or laced a slipper dim in gold haze drowned :
But if she puzzled, lo ! the mirror frowned ;
So she must smile to cheer her thoughtless friend
And thus unsolved her meditations end.
Nor might she muse, when from the appointed place,
New budded breasts, dissimulating grace

*A fond
plea for
not leav-
ing child-
hood yet*

*Of her
compan-
ionship
with re-
flections
in her
mirror
and in the
brazen
walls and
how it
was not
enough*

As March flakes feign the snowdrop's calm, showed
forms

Hazy like mushrooms when the night-time warms,
That globe and gleam, yet leave the stars in doubt
If on the dewy slopes they shift about.

For, did she muse, her sister first grew still,
Then, as she harder thought, frowned and looked
ill ;

So she for pity could no long time dwell
Upon these mysteries : yet all went well,
Nor did she find an urgency for thought
To mark events ; solutions came unsought,
Or were not needed : yet she had a need
Unhelped, though change thus patiently proceed,
And she be never long what she hath been.
Yea, even a mere white-mouse caged and seen
Through close-strung wires, will writhe its sleek length
high,

And hold with pinky paws, and seem to sigh
While, sniffing tainted air, it seeks a vent
From prison ; and then scurries back, as bent
On finding in the oft-searched farther end
Some small escape ; and, since its birth there penned,
Yet lives on, never losing childish hope
Somehow eventually its sense may cope
With most perplexing life-imprisonment :
Thus Danaë, with hopeful discontent,
Led to and fro her white shape in her life's
Wall-hampered home ; and still this useless strife's
Fatigue can barely disappoint a mind
So scantly versed in freedom, or unblind,
To fate's fell force, eyes closed by charity
To real and might-be sights' disparity.

*Again
fondness
pleads for
not yet
leaving
childhood* 'Tis time, come turn these loitering thoughts away
From those child years. Lack we the heart still ?—
“ Yea
Yet linger o'er the lovely ; soon, full soon,
The morning hours lose charm and it is noon.”

Of manners and accomplishments, you deem,
 So lonely maid had little. This may seem
 Quite certain ; yet, e'en as her tender flesh
 That readily took print or blenched, so fresh
 The quiet gods had kept her growing mind ;
 Leaves wet with dew in lettuce-hearts confined,
 Are not more dainty or more clear of hue :
 Though never to fib tempted, she was true.
 Two charming feet taught her how best to walk ;
 To please a sensitive ear she trained her talk ;
 Full oft to sit upright made her feel good
 And raised her languor to a better mood.
 Concerned to judge of objects which were best,
 Watchful for intuition, she would test
 Her least decision by renewed appeals
 To quick experience ; how it is she feels,
 Spacing her coral necklace beads with sprigs
 Of hen-and-chicken fern, and how with twigs
 Of box, whose leaves resemble beetle-wings :
 Thus, tracing beauty through a thousand things,
 Her features had assumed an earnest mien,
 Which would have well become enthroned queen.
 Yet, as a breeze with honeysuckle, she
 Had madcap moments, and her locks would free
 To dance and twine ; this freedom so became them
 She oft indulged it and was loth to tame them ;
 Yet when she did, thoroughly combed, she bound them
 With ribbons or in strings of pearls enwound them,
 Plaited them now, and now would have them crimple,
 Or snood them up completely in a wimple :
 For each success suggested new successes,
 Till she was taught distinction by her tresses.
 At meals, in ordinance for seemliness,
 Her practice like perfection did express !
 Disgust, watching her nurse's common ways,
 Had taught her what to avoid, and native grace
 Had chosen fine-cut morsels, moderate sips,
 And placed a napkin by to wipe her lips :
 "Thank you" and "please" she said, till nurse ex-
 claimed

*Of how in
 spite of
 lack of
 ensample
 and her
 seclusion
 she yet
 came to
 be of
 most
 gracious
 disposi-
 tion*

That matched with her a goddess might be shamed !
 Which praise gave her great pleasure ; in reward
 A kiss to the old crone she would accord ;
 For she had learned to win her judges over.
 Where is it women will not this discover ?
 Her little terra-cotta dolls to see
 Home to their cupboard, taught her courtesy ;
 For they were brittle, easily upset,
 As much so as folk for politeness met.
 To lay for meals and put away her toys
 Thus exercised her tact and furnished joys :
 While moths that entered during the warm nights
 Were novelties, excitements and delights.
 Their mealy wings, full early, she respected,
 And with both hands behind her them inspected,
 Enjoying golds and browns and marblings rich
 In shading finer than the finest stitch
 That silk embroidery can hope for ; she
 Their delicate curved feathered antennæ
 Admired, and supposed them an head-dress.
 Their jewelled eyes she knew at once, Oh yes !
 Though some bore eyes upon their pinions painted,
 With such deceiving wiles she was acquainted.
 The bronze-green rose-bug and the lady-bird
 Paid visits ; calls of butterflies occurred
 More rarely ; sparrows could be lured with crumbs,
 And even doves ; while wasps would light on plums.
 The characters of all she soon divined ;
 And from the first, these last distressed her mind ;
 For cruelty seemed such a proof of thought,
 She deemed this insect wiser than she ought,
 And hated it far more than there was need ;
 To women partial judgments Zeus decreed.

A third Come turn, though late, these too fond thoughts
time away
fondness From her full days. Still, still, Love pleadeth,
pleads for ' nay !
lingering But linger o'er the lovely : soon, full soon,
over The morning hours lose charm and it is noon !
- childhood

How long it took before her bed was made !
 Such precious cares expended, overpaid
 In self-approval sweet themselves ! It stood,
 A scaffold house of slender painted wood,
 Secluded like a shrine far in the room
 Where curtains through the day made hallowed gloom.
 Deep (many a dove gave every bosom feather)
 The mattress hung on straps of pliant leather,
 Which, through each other plaited, joined the frame ;
 Soft were the pillows ; over all there came
 A coverlet which made sheets gleam so white,
 Heaven's lining, outward turned, less dazzling bright
 Appears to those who, at the height of noon,
 Loll back on scented heather late in June
 And sound, beyond blue, blue and blue beyond.
 Blue drunk into sea sleeping like a pond
 Beneath such heavens, could scarcely match that quilt,
 Where the profusion of the night was spilt !
 Numberless stars, yea, stars of every size !
 Thus friendly night and day did fraternize ;
 Only the jealous sun, he was not there ;
 He with a silver crowd would nothing share,
 Neither a spangled cloth nor day's long void,
 Through which he rides in pomp, sole, sad and cloyed :
 Yet o'er her navel, when she lay supine,
 In its first quarter meek the moon did shine :
 This served for warmth ; but oh ! above her head,
 Hung the real glory of that lovely bed ;
 Which she, half-dreaming, studied many a morn
 With infant happiness, Sleep's newly-born.
 Fanwise did leafy boughs depth o'er depth rise,
 Like upward caves or under-sea green skies ;
 In whose ærial vaults the small sweet-voiced
 And never-wearied choristers rejoiced,
 And some had nests, and some were building them,
 And all made silence singing ! Folk condemn
 Long hours spent in this delicious way ;
 Leave them the busy middle of the day !
 Watch Danaë though, as pensive she undressed
 Like nun retiring from a world unblessed

*Of her
 bed with
 the
 morning
 and even-
 ing joys
 related
 thereto*

To dear herself and one god's service vowed.
 When naked, over her limp weeds she bowed,
 As Hypnos bends above a cold sad corse
 To extricate the soul some strange remorse
 For things disparaged once, keeps clinging there,
 Touched home too late ; so bowed she and such care
 She took to extricate all knots and fold
 Her pretty sheddings neatly, then, half cold,
 Whipped in between the sheets, and, wakened half,
 Drew on her simple nightdress with a laugh
 To think how lazy she in this was proved :
 But out she got that all its folds be smoothed.
 Chanting to Artemis her evening hymn
 With raised hands, looking skyward, stood a slim
 And pallid upright, like a style of stone,
 Or like the moon-lit path on waters lone.
 Then, gliding back to bed, she made a nest
 Remembering all the games that pleased her best
 What time she, younger, raised up tent or cave
 And head thrust downward did the darkness brave.
 So, smiling like a mother o'er such thought,
 Sank, as leaf floats down through a temple court,
 Down through Sleep's vasty halls of marble black—
 Like star-ray through dark sea, sank down and back.

Of the
 brazen
 tower
 the siege
 of the
 golden
 light and
 more of
 that sweet
 comrade-
 ship with
 the re-
 flected
 image of
 herself
 that con-
 tinues
 even into
 her swoon

But O return, return from those sweet days !
 Behold the theme of our fond wandering praise,
 Her father's should-be dearest, from his court
 Exiled, that lonely lies, swooned and amort !
 Where brilliant with bright brass the tower derides
 The sun's gold shafts ; which strike and on all sides,
 Like ridicule-lit laughter, spread ; while some
 In bravery bend back whence they have come,
 And try their strength with those that come direct,
 With first impetuous mastery unchecked
 From the god's bow ! There, there ! as orchid may,
 To make an oak's top mossy hollow gay,
 Be reared and blossom out of reach and sight,
 Wind-sown, the nursling of warm genial light,
 She dwells ; and there dwells deep in polished walls

The one companion to her lot that falls,
 Her body's double, for her soul's one friend,
 Who still with her to every task doth bend
 And lends a hand when she her needle threads,
 In step with her across the carpet treads,
 And ghost-like heaves a sigh that is not heard,
 And shapes with shadowy lips a soundless word,
 Whene'er Danaë has a sigh to heave
 Or drops a word that makes the silence grieve
 To think it was but one. This sister strange,
 Who circling wider round her life doth range,
 She hath believed more neat, graceful and kind ;
 Since in herself she blemishes can find ;
 And, when she does, her quick eyes turn within,
 So never catch the fair repeated sin :
 And, when again she glances toward her glass,
 She views her own reproachful mute " alas " ;
 For from the walls across the disk it steals
 Like a dear friend come close to say, she feels
 All sorrow at her misbehaving friend ;
 But, ere she speak, those admonitions end
 On finding sorrow, all as deep as hers,
 Welcome her own. Stretched upon glistening furs
 There, like still, fallen statues on old lawns,
 Deep puzzles for the country-minded fauns,
 These sisters slumbering lie. While mimic sun
 Up one outstretched arm, cautious, crawls, up one
 Real sun-lips steal, a-quiver yet to scare,
 So lose, their prize ; whom Zeus is well aware
 Lies not a-purpose in his path. From fear
 He even forbids the swallows twitter near.

While in her bath she washed herself that morn
 A dizzy whirl had from her senses borne
 The startled soul ; first, ere she strove to rise
 All trembling with the blankness of surprise,
 (She may have been day-dreaming in the water)

*How and
 at what
 time the
 swoon
 took her
 during*

*which she became endued to that element of love ; thenceforward to dwell therein.
 Though escaping that extravagance of knowledge which knows what it is not, she
 being good shall think no evil*

Flashing live from its surface, sunlight caught her ;
 Next, struggling up and out on towels spread
 Soft snowy for her wet bare feet to tread,
 The bath she fancied stood not where it used ;
 The room swam round her then. Dizzy, confused,
 Turning half wildered with the rocking light
 That leapt up off the new-quit water bright
 And gave her chase, she turns, and turns, and sinks,
 Half tries to think, yet knows she nothing thinks
 But droops along beyond the towelled space,
 Feels a warm darkness close down o'er her face :
 And feels no more nor hears her nurse's knocks
 Or voice that bids her raise the latch that locks
 The door from the inside : the light is round her
 And Zeus as in a golden sea has drowned her
 To which she is not native, but endued
 Shall be ere long, and then, with life renewed
 Shall, sweet soul, to its depths be a mute fish,
 Yet not know Zeus's will : he doth not wish
 That she should know, but is more than content
 Searching to find her all his love had meant,
 As fresh, as gladdening as her body's beauty
 In thought and will, which call themselves not duty
 But are what they should be,—entirely give
 The guerdon for which life is bound to live :—
 Self-approbation of such inwardness,
 It could grow conscious but by being less.

*Of her
 coy dis-
 trust of
 the Light
 and how
 she be-
 came
 more
 friendly
 with it*

Daily, it had been, when some hour entered
 In at her casement high, Zeus even dared
 Come close up to the tall embroidering frame—
 Just as his fingers set her wools aflame,
 She started up to move more in the shade ;
 Still on he crept, and still she was afraid
 To feel his touch ; so his light widened, till
 No shade, except beneath the window-sill,
 Was left ; there crouched she in the broad'ning belt
 And watched the crimson of his last rays melt.
 She liked to see and dodge him round the room,
 Which was great fun ; he gone, all grew to gloom.

So had she done, oh often, very oft !
But change had come, a gradual change and soft,
Stealing as in fur slippers to her side,
And taught her less to hurry, more to glide.
She stole away still when broad rays encroached ;
But now, as though she feared to be reproached,
Would hold her hand back in their golden shower,
Then instantly withdraw it : round her bower
Was thus pursued and stooped beneath the sill,
Like one whom awe and silence wholly fill
And wonder at the expanse of warmth, of power,
Of light, of glory : and the twilight hour
Had oft surprised her in such ecstasies.
Then had she risen stiffly from her knees
To gaze out on the tranquillizing hues,
Blues that are almost gray, grays that are blues,
And as the stars came out would then recall
The thoughts that hour would bring when she was
small.

For then of old her nurse would lift her where
She might well watch old darkness overbear
The youthful light whom all things plead for,—sheep
Who bleat and lowing herds and, half asleep,
Birds, ever loath to note how day's cup fills
With joy ; and stables, then, and woods and hills
Hush up ; nymphs, centaurs, folk with tails and
horns,

Settle themselves in nooks near lulling bourns.
Then, floated to her head, came children's chatter,
And she, it may be, startled by such clatter,
Would let her eyes droop down to darkening earth,
And watch them playing in their noisy mirth.
Ofttimes they, quarrelling, fell by the ears
For some small sudden play-chance ; then her tears
Ran fast, and such upheaving sobs would rend
Her slight frail frame as would not know an end
Till she was tucked up in her neat white bed ;
When would commence a coursing through her head
Of wondering queries, how their love and hate
Were roused, till stunned by sleep importunate.

A confession that childhood has not been left and an excuse for fondness Why ! are we back again in childhood's time ?
Never but thus life leaves that balmy clime,
To strong returns of infant tenderness
Yielding, and wisely ; and we likewise, yes,
Will yield and slowly travel from those days
As she made journey slowly ; oft with grace
Turned and kissed moods which had been parted with,
And gaining joy herself to us shall give.

Of her small knowledge concerning love So tall and slender later on she grew
That, planted on a footstool, she could view
The many lanes that led up through the fields,
In which stroll, towards where deeper shadow shields
First fallen leaves, two, whose young summer grieves
That autumn litter should, as withered leaves
Haunt the hedge skirt, hang round their bowering bliss,
Dead moods of light-foot spring which now they miss.
They loiter on and the withdrawing sky
Pities feet slow in dust, higher more high
Recedeth and expandeth wider o'er them,
Softened with prescience of the years before them.
They, late, in most reposeful country life,
Have found unrest and something of the strife
Of hearts, which cruel Eros loves to see.
What balm was theirs to soothe, as peacefully
They went, arm-linked ? what made them so content
In silence thus to walk, together leant ?
Boundless and vague, deep wishes welled in her ;
Wide grew her eyes ; and through the echoing air
A memory (sad, single, precious scrap
Of love-lore) sang, (while round her eyes she'd wrap
Her hair to blind them), what she once had heard
A poor girl sing :—so sorrow's tide recurred :
“ Haste thee, haste thee to my arms ;
Like a vine torn from a tree,
Hang they, emptied of thy charms.
Helplessly
Drooping, can I longer hide
What I am, that's not thy bride ? ”
Like some sick leaf a fierce wind hunts alone,

Proving its gold ring false on stem and stone,
This feather from Love's wing to Danaë blew.
Ignorant of his name was she, nor knew
Aught of his antic gambols with the maids,
As, when she questions, her old nurse upbraids.
This crone, be sure, had had instruction strict,
To see how 'tis she lets herself be tricked
To talk of love, men's manners, women's wiles ;
Therefore, well-taught how innocence beguiles
The weak lips to unwise discovery,
Has bound her tongue to stay most silently
Within her mouth, till, grown so taciturn,
Her gossip's-heart has learnt to never yearn
For converse, though she truly loves the child—
Who, the song sung, let loose her hair and smiled.
Soon lifted eyes were tempted off anew
Among the stars, those eyes most simply true,
Thought but small holes drilled through a roof, the sky :
What should she know of gods or destiny,
Of Zeus, sky-king, or Kypris and her doves ?
What was to tell of them except their loves ?
No prayer she said ; nor had she learnt to muse
How life's a dream, or of the soul that sues
For speech from out the frost-bound lips of fate ;
Nor knew she aught of the omniscience great,
Or how her small mind some would father so.
Yet there of mystery was what she might know ;
Who had found tokens in her tiny round ;
That little limit of her life was ground
Sufficient for a larger, lovelier growth,
Attaching meanings to the light ; how loath
It was to shine, she thought, through such small holes
When the vast void, through which the day's sun rolls,
It could flood, ending night's long thirst unslakéd ;
Yet could not clothe in words her fancy's nakéd
Beauty. Since her vocabulary small
Drafted from out her nurse's might not call
Her thoughts by name, she smiled them to her side,
A mind's eye-harvest sweeter, not more wide,
Than filled a miser-barrel's cynic-round

Of sky-blue. Disentangled and unwound,
 Her idea of the home of blessedness,
 Whence stars shone, could not lull such vague distress
 As bosky gardens rouse in glow-worm eyes,—
 Could not release from fear or authorize
 The hopes it fed ; but as that insect creeps,
 Peering through haze which its own radiance steeps,
 And shown by light, that haunts it like a ghost,
 A few tufts ; so the things her life loves most
 Are shown to her with disproportionate worth,
 Lit by a heart as lonely from its birth,
 As on the moors a glow-worm star at night :
 Poor lone heart wandering far from realms of light !
 Her swoon's dream is, that she, transported thither,
 Loves, wanders, close-companioned, near a river ;
 Un-characterized the friend, whose arms embrace her
 Slow pacing down a path star-daisies trace there.
 Meanwhile at home and far from such a place,
 The sun, stretched o'er her, showers on her face
 Kisses, that meet no blush, nor dint the snow :
 Thus summer wastes, for all the high peaks know.

*Of the
 brazen
 tower and
 of her
 father's
 folly*

Yet, brilliant with bright brass, the tower derides
 The sun's gold shafts ; which strike and on all sides,
 Glance like bright-parried laughter, spread ; and some
 In bravery bend back whence they have come,
 And try their strength with those that come direct,
 With their full genial potency unchecked,
 From the god's heart. Oh vanity of pride !
 In which a royal miser hopes to hide
 His coward purpose, at his child's expense,
 Starving her of those benefits immense
 Which, to the growing soul, friendship and love
 Yield like boon climates. Is not Zeus above ?
 And will he be accomplice to thy fears ?
 What weapons hast thou 'gainst him, save thy tears,
 If thou dost think to oppose ? How ! has he given
 His oracle, yet, still out-braving heaven,
 Standeth thy coward boast of hollow brass ?
 Oh vanity of vanities, alas !

Yet she is loved : Zeus well has weighed her need ;
 Although the wealth within her be not freed ;
 And she know not, as oft it is not known
 To maids whom hearts of worth have claimed their own,
 That she is loved. No haunting of her mind
 By gaze or voice sets in ; still shall she find
 Solace in things unthankful, for her yearning.
 Yet now dark silence warms, her fate is turning
 From life love-stinted overmuch ; for save
 Her nurse, no one to love, or that could crave
 Her love, she knew, thus let heart-worship fall
 Portioned to dead things—as some silken shawl,
 That she would hold against her cheek—kiss it,
 Space out, and bid its folds her fancy fit ;
 Till thus an afternoon be whiled away,
 Fondling its foolish yards. Another day
 Brought flowers that came in pitchers, or a load
 Plumping an apron, or else singly stowed
 In with the butter, sprinkled o'er the fruit,
 Or making dewy nests for eggs. First mute
 For gladness, next with clapping hands, on feet
 That totter with impatience, see her greet
 With airy kisses little friends—small eyes
 Glorious with gazing on the liberal skies,
 Sent by the open-hearted folk who wonder
 “ How fares small prisoner princess penned up yonder ? ”
 Friends, but ah ! torture like to tongue-tied love,
 She knew no names for Heartsease, or Foxglove ;
 The spindle-parsley, purple vetch, the clover
 Were all as nameless as her trance's lover ;
 She coo'd above them sounds in pet-names 'stead.
 Sweet “ Aphrodite's navel,” “ Nipple-red,”
 Her “ Fly-trap,” or her son “ Love in a mist,”
 Or crimson May called “ Kisses double-kissed ”—
 Such were the only names her old nurse knew,
 But told not, fearing she'd explain them too.
 Next in her favour stood some exile shells—
 Large lips, agape with wonder-working spells,
 Which the ear hearing, vainly the mind strove
 To dredge a meaning from. So oft she wove

*Of how
 the love
 with
 which she
 was loved
 although
 unknown
 to her
 caused a
 brighten-
 ing in her
 days*

With nets and toils of hair one to her ear,
 Deep in that cushion sunk she found most dear,
 Her feet out-thrust on the mat most to her mind,
 Because, 'mid green waved lines, it showed a kind
 Of ready needle-pictured likeness to
 Her whole bare body, over which there flew
 Much smaller portraits of herself, as she
 Is to her mind brought back by memory.
 As thus she sits, her treasures piled about,
 Words foil her ears that, in a sailor's shout—
 "Aphrodite,
 Each wave mothers
 Thine almighty
 Form ; uncovers
 It each breeze,
 Thee to please,
 And to tease
 All thy lovers."

Of her swoon's ending and of a confused interval of pain which continued into her dreams Sun down, the thick swoon from her body lifted :
 So, from frost-filméd tarn, a mist unrifted
 Lifts, yet hangs waiting near. A vivid grey
 Blinded her ; night's cold coming drove away
 Her sense once more ; she slept, while pain did drum
 With muffled hands her temples dull and numb.
 Confusedly capricious dreams have wrung
 Those tones from her with which that girl had sung,
 "Unsupported by thine arms,
 Like a vine torn from a tree,
 Hang mine, emptied of thy charms,
 Helplessly . . ."
 While, as sea-chants climb twisted shells to bed,
 Male words through dainty doors have reached her head.

Of the change that from that time was worked in her, and how she made a little store of treasures for her baby though she knew not of his coming. And how at the same time she began to neglect the reflections of herself both in mirror and wall and took to sitting in the sun And from this night, as some fond woman sits
 Beside her love, she with the sun, when its

First matin wealth plunged on her shoulder, till,
Having bathed and blessed her, it slipped o'er the sill.
Her soul subdued to might of things concealed,
The purpose of her being unrevealed
Worked through her, changed her ; so a female swan,
Who, young, till then without a care sailed on,
Quits the delightful mirror of the lake
And mid the rushes doth herself betake
To build a nest ; the first that she hath made,
Nor yet foresees its use. So now obeyed
Danaë instinct's deep imperative ;
Great tenderness she to her voice doth give,
Her movements grow more lulling and woo more,
Her smiles come trembling from her heart's full core ;
Like a brimmed bowl in gleeful anxious hands
Her features shake with rapture : there she stands
Tranced, while the future thrills her through and through,
Feeling more good than she knows reason to,
As though she had been conquered from within
And her lord, Love, through her the world would win.
While, from dim distance, drowned in walls that gleam,
There waits for her approach, as it would seem,
Her hazy golden double, waits and smiles
Poor warder shade, who never more beguiles
Her charge of interest ; for squirrel-souled
Danaë now puts by. Her hoard will hold
No treasure more full soon ; all are designed
For some one ; who that some one is her mind
Has no clear knowledge ; yet her wealth set out,
Her terra-cotta friends stood all about,
She sits among them and she smiles at each
And sometimes seems surprised they still lack speech.
Then takes the dearest with brown curls and cap
Pale blue : him smiling, naked, will she wrap
In her best kerchief, and away he goes
To wait in the dark hoard. Zeus only knows
Who 'tis he waits for there with balls of silk,
Shells, silver trinkets, and gold mugs ; her milk
She now drinks from a bowl of maple wood,
Yet surely finds it twice as rich and good,

So changed she was. The world too seemed becalmed :
 All summer usage lingered unalarmed.
 For the fierce forest-fires of autumn sped
 Slower, glowed larger with less hectic red,
 To equal the great glow of July gold.
 It seemed that ne'er, they fallen low, their cold
 White ashes would be huddling round the farms
 And choking in at doors. On false alarms
 Birds flew to sea : still the bland weather stayed ;
 Later, the roof of clouds, rent through or frayed,
 On winter's lap let warm boons drop, to cheer
 Men's hearts. Such fondling had the tower dear,
 Where each and all those gleams are welcomed like
 A lover's letter.

*How the
 spring re-
 turning
 made
 many
 things
 apparent
 that be-
 fore were
 hid and
 of her
 father's
 conse-
 quent
 panic and
 cruelty*

When young breezes strike
 A tune, and Spring, spry wanton, comes, her nurse
 Looks puzzled, makes her pinched-up lips to purse
 And her eyes blink, bewildered, at the maid,
 Who goldly glimmers in the gleam. Afraid
 They have not told her of the thing aright,
 She falls to rubbing them with all her might ;
 For, lo ! a woman with child, no maid, is that
 Sits where the maid a year before had sat,
 She fain had got to scolding but delayed,
 So clear the eyes she met ; and then she prayed
 She might be much mistaken, and still knew
 She was not ; such a queer knot how undo ?
 For she had ne'er an instant left the tower,
 Scarcely the room for much more than an hour.
 Who could have done this thing ? O ye great gods,
 Walls, locks, and all man's cares make little odds
 To you, when once ye have a mind a thing
 Shall be : well may a man stare, whistle, sing,
 And blow upon his nails, if ye have entered
 With him a race on which perhaps had centered
 Dozens of spangled hopes—or life ; 'tis one,
 And the race won before 'tis ever run.
 So, when a boy-child came to light, her father
 Had to be told he was grandsire ; though rather
 His ears had heard his daughter, pined away

In prison lone, was gone to swell, that day,
 The dim ranks of his dead who wait in earth's
 Strongholds, all kings, or issue by their births
 Of kings, or queens, or queenly-mothered.
 He felt as though an ire-forged bolt o'erhead
 Was hurtling wilfully, like to the disc
 Young men in rivalry hurl, whereby great risk
 Is run by such as watch : so, all at once,
 Fear, worst midwife for action, did ensconce
 Herself within the unheroic head
 Of king Acrisius, and straightway from bed
 Women she knows not drag the hapless girl.

A chest they brought inlaid with jet and pearl,
 With ivory incrustations held by nails
 Of orichalc : yet seasoned, such as sails
 For months uninjured o'er the salt Levant
 The dovetailed cedar frame. Bevelled, I grant,
 Were the long reeds that ribbed its seams within :
 And yet their purpose with it was but sin !
 The cumbrous lid had been prized from its hinges,
 Blood, from torn fingers shed then, grimly tinges
 Darker the dark wood near their former place ;
 Oh, deep and broad and long enough the space
 Its scented sides enclosed ; cushion and shawl
 They stint no more than for an alcove small,
 Draped that a queen might chat with a princess,
 Their hearts were hard as naked planks no less !
 They placed the frightened mother in this box
 Still in her night-shift. Nought she strives, but rocks
 And rocks her baby, rocks her own heart's terror ;
 And by this meekness double-dyes their error,
 Who lift her down and round the tower stair
 And strap the huge chest firmly to a pair
 Of long stout litter poles ; the slaves flag not,
 But set it swinging, breaking to a trot,
 And on she passes through the town, shawl-hid.
 Like muffled granddame to a banquet bid,
 She hears the castanets of dancing girls,
 But scents no drugg'd whiffs from their shaken curls ;

*Of her
 journey
 toward
 the open
 sea. The
 great
 element
 whose
 energy
 conquers
 fear and
 gives
 freedom,
 teaching
 to all men
 a true
 knowledge
 of them-
 selves : so
 that some
 become
 beasts
 through
 sojourn
 upon it,
 and
 some
 heroes.
 But she
 shall be*

taught to know her happiness that she may continue in blessedness

She hears the slaves hail those who block the way,
Sees not the torch-lit market bright as day ;
She hears loud hearty sailors, in their tavern,
Rousing its gaunt drift-timbers like a cavern.
Sees not the painted goddess, its lewd sign,
Soused by the hiccuping roysterers, drip with wine ;
Sees not the pine brand blaze above the quay,
But hears armed heels crunch shingle heavily,
While for this cause the chest uneasy reels,
Under and through the wraps it stirs, she feels
A fresh wet wind and hears the weltering wash
Of waters ; then the poles run out, feet splash :
And, when, set down again, she raised her eyes,
She saw the simple stars, that in surprise
Were crowded close together. Long she, dazed,
Lay like a fallen winged-thing ; while the raised
Male voices dwindled till the dipping oars
Could make their rhythm felt. Then low-banked shores,
To rowlock's dulléd beat, processional,
Parade black-blotted groups of poplar tall
Like mutes ; between their trunks, like lines of tombs,
On either side behind, the night mist glooms :
And like some broken-hearted woman bent
That heaves her hair with sobs,—as on she went—
A willow kneels among them here and there.
The water wakes and louder wails to her—
Nay, wails with old choked sorrows now no more :
Triumphant shouts, borne from a sonorous shore,
Break up her trance, and happy hurried airs
Make haste—lest she, when shaken unawares
On Aphrodite's cradle-rockers, fear—
To whisper good-will tidings in her ear.
A boat had laboured with the chest in tow :
Dull wooden sounds faint ; homeward it doth go.
All this long time she held her baby tight,
And stared the poor stars out with all her might :
Now, looking down, she sees his waking eyes
Claim—as his curled gold locks the sun—the skies
In parentage. She dandles in the air
The pretty wanton ; who then clips her hair

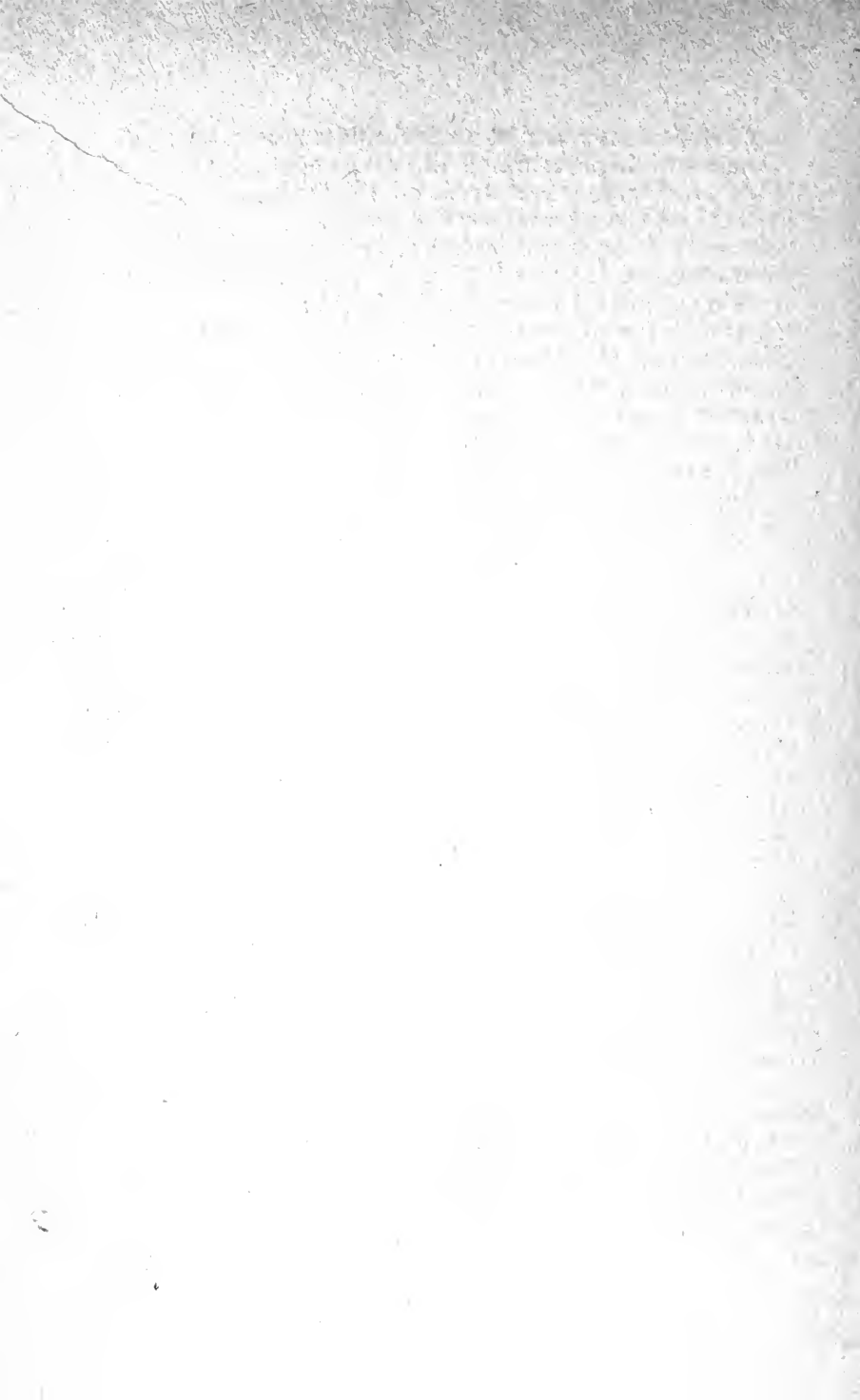
In fist-fulls, crows, and o'er her shoulder spies
Hermes with Zephyrs wing'd like dragon-flies,
Who, watchful how such frolic crew behaves,
Pilots them o'er blue inly-varied waves.
So many blues, yet each unlike the other,
Grow all greens, when a Zephyr flies his brother.
In vain the gallant Hermes doffs his hat ;
For jealous Zeus gave strict commandment, that
His messenger should do his duty, dight
In form impalpable to mortal sight :
Yet, well seen of the baby demi-god,
He from the merry knave receives a nod.
Far, far behind the tall grey tower stands
Against the north, as left by Night's rash hands
On brilliant-breasted Dawn, a bruise of blue,
To fade as her hale pulse revives anew !

O happier thou than women, who must know
At last by day-light, not moon's opal glow,
Him whom they loved,—thou, loved by the unknown,
A mother, all a mother's joys thine own,
Without the pain that overtakes a wife
To learn love lasts a season not for life,
Must be replaced by friendship at the best,—
Thou, thou art happy in thy wave-rocked nest,
Not to have loved, not to have known a lover,
Yet with fond kisses thus thy babe to cover !

*Of why
she should
be con-
sidered
most
blessed*

This god-freed, god-loved woman hail aloud
Breezes ! your king the sun mounts o'er yon cloud.
Swell those big-chested conches, strain trumpet-throats ;
He hears and knows you, though she little notes.
Still the sad silent home, that distance veils,
Each moment bears behind, as on she sails
To new life, lit with large affinities ;
And for her son Perseus what destinies
Await, beyond the sounding straits that sunder
Dead past from future life ! On sailed they under
The tingling blue, till, lo ! Seriphos reared
Above a million moving waves, appeared.

*Of joy set
free*



AFORETIME

TO GORDON BOTTOMLEY

AFORETIME

Dear exile from the hurrying crowd,
At work I muse to you aloud ;
Thought on my anvil softens, glows,
And I forget our art has foes ;
For life, the mother of beauty, seems
A joyous sleep with waking dreams.
Then the toy armoury of the brain
Opining, judging, looks as vain
As trowels silver gilt for use
Of mayors and kings, who have to lay
Foundation stones in hope they may
Be honoured for walls others build.
I, in amicable muse,
With fathomless wonder only filled,
Whisper over to your ear
Listening two hundred odd miles north,
And give thought chase that, were you here,
Our talk would never run to earth.

Man can answer no momentous question :
Whence comes his spirit ? Has it lived before ?
Reason fails ; hot springs of feeling spout
Their snowy columns high in the dim land
Of his surmise—violent divine decisions
That often rule him : and at times he views
Portraits of places he has never been to,
Yet more minute and vivid than remembrance
Of boyhood homes, sail between sleep and waking
Like some mirage, refuting all experience
With topsy-turvy ships,
That steals by in dead calms through tropic haze :
And many a man in his climacteric years,
Thoughts and remembered words have roused from sleep
With knowledge that he lacked on lying down :
And I, lapped in a trance of reverie, doubt
Some spore of episodes
Anterior far beyond this body's birth,
Dispersed like puffs of dust impalpable,

Wind-carried round this globe for centuries,
May, breathed with common air, yet swim the blood,
And striking root in this or that brain, raise
Imaginations unaccountable ;
One such seems half-implied in all I am,
And, many times re-pondered, shapes like this :

A child myself, I watch a woman loll
Like to a clot of seaweed thrown ashore ;
Heavy and limp as cloth soaked in black dye,
She glooms the noontide dazzle where a bay
Bites into vineyarded flats close-fenced by hills,
Over whose tops lap forests of cork and fir
And reach in places half down their rough slopes.
Lower, some few cleared fields square on the thickets
Of junipers and longer thorns than furze
So clumped that they are trackless even for goats.
I know two things about that woman : first
She is a slave and I am free, and next
As mothers need their sons' love she needs mine.
Longings to utter fond compassionate sounds
Stir through me, checked by knowing wiser folk
Reprobate such indulgence. Ill at ease,
Mute, yet her captive, I thrust brown toes through
Loose sand no daily large tides overwhelm
To cake and roll it firm and smooth and clean
As the Atlantic remakes shores, you know.
But there, like trailing skirts, long flaws of wind
Obliterate the prints feet during calms
Track over and over its always lonely stretch,
Till some will have it ghosts must rove at night ;
For folk by day are rare, yet a still week
Leaves hardly ten yards anywhere uncrossed ;
Tempest spreads all revirginate like snow,
Half burying dead wood snapped off from tossed trees,—
Since right along the foreshore, out of reach
Of furious driven waves, three hundred pines
Straggle the marches between sand and soil.
Like maps of stone-walled fields their branching roots
Hold the silt still so that thin grass grows there,
Its blades whitened with travelling powdery drift

The besom of the lightest breeze sets stirring.
That woman's gaze toils worn from remote years,
Yet forward yearns through the bright spacious noon,
Beyond the farthest isle whose filmy shape
Floats faint on the sea-line.
I, scooping grains up with the frail half-shell
Pale green and white-lined of sea-urchin, knew
What her eyes sought : as often children know
Of grief or sin they could not name or think of
Yet soothe or shrink from, so I saw and longed
To heal her tender wound, and yet said naught.
The energy of bygone joy and pain
Had left her listless figure charged with magic
That caught and held my idleness near hers.
Resentful of her power, my spirit chafed
Against its own deep pity, as though it were
Raised ghost and she the witch had bid it haunt me.
What's more, I knew this slave by rights should glean
And faggot drift-wood, not lounge there and waste
My father's food, dreaming his time away.
For then as now the common-minded rich
Grudged ease to those whose toil brought them in means
For every waste of life. At length I spoke,
Insulting both my inarticulate soul
And her with acted anger : " Lazy wretch,
Is it for eyes like yours to watch the sea
As though you waited for a homing ship ?
My father might with reason spend his hours
Scanning the far horizon ; for our Swan,
Whose outward lading was full half a vintage,
Is now months overdue." She turned on me
Her languor knit and, through its homespun wrap,
Her muscular frame gave hints of rebel will,
While those great caves of night, her eyes, faced mine,
Dread with the silence of unuttered wrongs :
At last she spoke as one who must be heeded.
Truly, I am not clear
Whether her meaning was conveyed in words
(She mingled accents of an Eastern tongue
With deformed phrases of our native Latin)
Or whether thought from her gaze poured through mine.

The gravity of recollected life
 Was hers, condensed and, like a vision, flashed
 Suddenly on the guilty mind, a whole
 Compact ; no longer a mere tedious string
 Of moments negligible, each so small
 As they were lived, but stark like a slain man
 Who would alive have been ourself with twice
 The skill, the knowledge, the vitality
 Actually ours. Yea, as a tree may view
 With fingerless boughs and lorn pole impotent,
 An elephant gorged upon its leaves depart,
 Men often have reviewed an unwieldy past,
 That like a feasted Mammoth, leisured and slow,
 Turned its back on their warped bones. Even thus,
 Momentous with reproach, her grave regard
 Made me feel mean, cashiered of rank and right.
 My limbs that twelve good years had nursed were
 numbed
 And all their fidgety quicksilver grew stiff ;
 Novel and fevering hallucinations
 Invaded my attention. So daylight
 When shutters are thrown back spreads through a house ;
 As then the dreams and terrors of the night
 Decamp, so from my mind were driven
 All its own thoughts and feelings. Close she leant
 Propped on a swarthy arm, while the other helped
 With eloquent gesture potent as wizard wand,
 Veil the world off as with an airy web,
 Or flowing tent agleam with pictured folds.
 These tauten and distend—one sea of wheat,
 Islanded with black cities, borders now
 The voluminous blue pavilion of day.
 There-under to the nearest of those towns
 This woman younger by ten years made haste
 While at her side ran a small boy of six.
 They neared the walls ; half a huge double gate
 Lay prostrate, though the other by stone hinges
 Hung to its flanking tower. The path they followed
 Threaded an old paved road whose flags were edged
 With dry grass and dry weeds, even cactuses

Had pushed the stones up or found root in muck heaps ;
The path struck up the slope of the fallen door,
Basalt like midnight, o'er which dusty feet
Had greyed a passage, for it rested on
Some débris fallen from the left-hand tower,
And from its upper edge rude blocks like steps
Led down into the straight main street, that ran
Past eyeless buildings mined as it were from coal,
And earthquake-raised to light. Palaces and
Roofless wide-flighted colonnaded temples,
The uncemented walls piled-plumb with blocks
Squared, polished, fitted with dæmonic patience,
Each gaping threshold high again as need be
Waited a nine-foot lord to enter hall,
Where the least draughty corner sheltered now
Half-tented hut or improvised small home
For Arab, brown, light-footed and proud-necked
As was this woman with the compelling voice.
Their present hatched and hived within that past
As bees in the parchment chest of Samson's lion ;
And all seemed conscious that their life was sweet,
Like mice who clean their faces after meals
And have such grace of movement, when unscared,
As wins the admiration even of those
Whose stores they rob and soil. I saw her eyes
Young with contentment in her son
And smaller babe and in their handsome sire,
And knew that many a supper had been relished
With hearts as joyous as waited while she cooked
And served upon returning to their cot
In hall where once far other hearts caroused.
They and their tribe could never reap a tithe
Of the vast harvest rustling round those ruins,
And over which a half-moon soon set forth
From black hills mounded up both east and south,
While north-west her light played on distant summits ;
All the huge interspace floored with standing corn
Which kings afar send soldiery to reap,
Who now, beside a long canal cut straight
In ancient days, have pitched their noisy camp

Which on that vast staid silence makes a bruise
Of blare and riot that its robust health
Will certainly heal in a brief lapse of time.

One night, re-thought on after ten whole years,
Is like the condor high above the Andes,
A speck with difficulty found again
Once the attention quits it. And I next
Descried our woman under breathless noon,
Bathing in a clear lane of gliding water
Whose banks seem lonely as the path of light
Crossing mid ocean south of Capricorn.
Her son steals warily after a butterfly
And is as hushed with hope to capture it
As are the birds with heat. An insect hum
Circles the spot as round a cymbal's rim,
Long after it has clanged, tingles a throb
Which in a dream forgets the parent sound.
Oppressed by this protracted and awe-filled pause,
She hardly dares to wade the stream, and moves
As though in dread to wake some sleeping god,
Yet still she nears and nears the further bank
Where there is shade under a shumac's eaves.
The brilliant surface cut her right in two,
And the reflection of her bronzed torso
Hid all beneath the polished gliding mirror ;
How her face listened to that sleep divine
Whose audible breath was tuned to dreams of bliss !

Sudden, as though the woof of heaven were torn,
A strident shout rang from some neighbour shrubs ;
Three Nubian soldiers ran up on her with
Delighted oily faces. Screaming first
Commands to her small son to make for home,
She laboured to recross the current as when
In nightmares the scared soul expects to die
Tortured by mutiny in limbs like lead.
But as the playful lion of the sea
Climbs the rock ledges hard by Fingal's cave
To throw himself down into deep green baths,

While others barking follow his vigorous lead,
The foremost Abyssinian threw his weight
Before her with a splash that hid them both,
As the explosion of light-filled liquid parcels
Shot forth in all directions. In his arms
She reappeared, a tragic terrified face
Beside his coarse one laughing with success.
Squeezing her with a pantomime of love,
He turns to follow an arrow with his eyes
That his companion, still upon the bank,
Has aimed towards her son's small head that bobbed
Like a black cork across the basking corn.
But from the level of the sunk stream bed
Neither he nor she could see the target aimed at,
Yet in the pause they heard the poor child scream ;
A second arrow, second scream ; she fought,
But soon like bundle bound, hung o'er his shoulder,
Helpless as a mouse in cat's mouth carried off
In search of quiet, there to play with it.
Those arrows missed or did they not ? The child
Shrieked twice, yet scarcely like a wounded thing
She thought and hoped ; and still but thinks and hopes.
Where is that boy ? Where is her husband now ?
While she submitted body to force and soul
To the great shuddering violence of despair
How had their life progressed in that far place ?
Compassion fused my consciousness with hers
And second-sighted eloquence arose
To claim my mind for rostrum,
But obstinately tranced
My eyes clung to their vision ;
For regions to explore allure the boy
No stretch of thought or sea of feeling tempts.
Entranced, the mind I then had, haunted
Those basalt ruins. High on sable towers
Some silky patriarchal goat appears
And ponders silent streets, or suddenly
Some nanny, her huge bag swollen with milk,
Trots out on galleries that unfenced run
Round vacant courts, there, stopped by plaintive kids,

Lets them complete their meal. While always, always,
Throughout those mazed, sullen and sun-soaked
walls,

The steady, healthy wind,
Which often blows for weeks without a lull
Across that upland plain,
Flutes staidly. Moaning
Continuously as seas
Or forests before storm,
And, gathering moment,
Articulated by her woe, begins
With second-sighted eloquence
To wail through me,
Nigh as unheeded
As though it still had been
Meaningless wind.

For ah ! the heart is cowed
And dares not use her strength :
Hears the kind impulse plead
Against the common avaricious fear,—
Grants it but life, though sovereignty was due,
Or does it sway but one day out of seven
Or one a year.

So, so, and ever, so
In the close-curtained court
Those causes are deferred
Which most import ;
These wait man's leisure.
These daily matters elbow ;
Merely because
His panic meanness
Jibs blindly ere it hear
What wisdom has prepared,
Bolts headlong ere it see
Her face unfold its smile.
Man after man, race after race
Drops jaded by the iterancy
Of petty fear.

Even as horses on the green steppes grazing,
Hundreds scattered through lonely peacefulness,
If shadow of cloud or red fox breaking earth
Delude but one with dream of a stealthy foe,
All are stampeded.
Their frantic torrent draws in,
With dire attraction, cumulative force,
Stragglers grazing miles from where it started ;
On it thunders quite devoid of meaning.
The tender private soul
Thus takes contagion from the sordid crowd,
And shying at mere dread of loss,
Loses the whole of life.
Thus, in the vortex of a base turmoil,
Those myriad millions energies wear down
That might have raised mankind
To live the life of gods.

Had but my soul been his,
As his was mine,
Those wind-resembling accents
Had found fit auditor.
Their second-sighted eloquence,
Welcomed with acclamation,
Had fired action.
But that was ages since : he was not then
What now I am,
Who have no longer
The opportunity then mine, then missed,—
Who still am dazed and troubled
Surmising others mine, others missed.

Passionate, never-wearied voice,
Tombbed in thy brittle shell
This human heart,
Thou croonest age on age,
“ Give and ask not,
Help and blame not,”
Heeded less than large and mottled cowry
The which at least some child may hold to ear
All smiles to listen.

Thou findest parables ;
With fond imagination
Adorning truth
For the successive
Unpersuaded
Generations.

This boy, myself that was,
Musing visions by that woman raised,
Watched that land she came from, town'd with ruins
Send mile-long files of laden camels out
With grain to hostile cities,—
Knew too the blue entrancing plain of waters
Teemed with fresh shoals, buoyed up indifferently,
Fisher—trader—pirate bark,—
Even the straight thought whispered at his ear,
“ Thy lips might join with hers as with some cousin's,
Here, now, at noon,
Hugging her bereavéd sadness close,
And still, to-night, with equal satisfaction,
Thy mother's blind contentment with her son.”
While half-seduced, half-chafed, his mind was shaken
As with conflicting gusts a choppy sea,
His eyes, still greedy of their visions,
Fastened a swarthy town enisled in wheat,
And to the ebon threshold of each house,
Conjured forth the man that each was planned for :
Great creatures smiling with his father's smile,
Muscular, wealthy and self-satisfied,
Wearing loud-coloured raiment, earrings, chains,
Armlet and buckle, all of clanking gold.
His spirit drank from theirs great draughts of pride
And read their minds more clearly than his own :
All, with one counsel like a chorus, dinned
His soul, that then was mine,
With truths well-proved with action.
“ Love is chaos,
For order's sake
Whatever must be, should be,”
Roared those bulls of Bashan.

Then their proud chant argued,
“ How should this woman know
Her little lad again,
Who either now is bones
Under the fertile field,
Or well-nigh a grown man ?
Say they should cross at market
Both slaves would pass on, not a start the wiser.
What is she then to him
Or he to her
After these years ?
To drag a life that might have been but is not
With toil of mind and heart,
Through dreary year on year,
Neglecting for its sake the life that is,
Spells folly and ingratitude to those
Who treat their slaves well.
Thy father’s household and thyself should be
More to her now than those who may be dead,
The place she lives in dearer
Than any unattainable far land
Where she is more forgotten than old dreams.
Why make the day of evil worse
By dwelling on it after it has past ?
Near things alone are real,
Now is the whole of time :
Places beyond the horizon are but pictures ;
Memory cheats the eye with an illusion ! ”

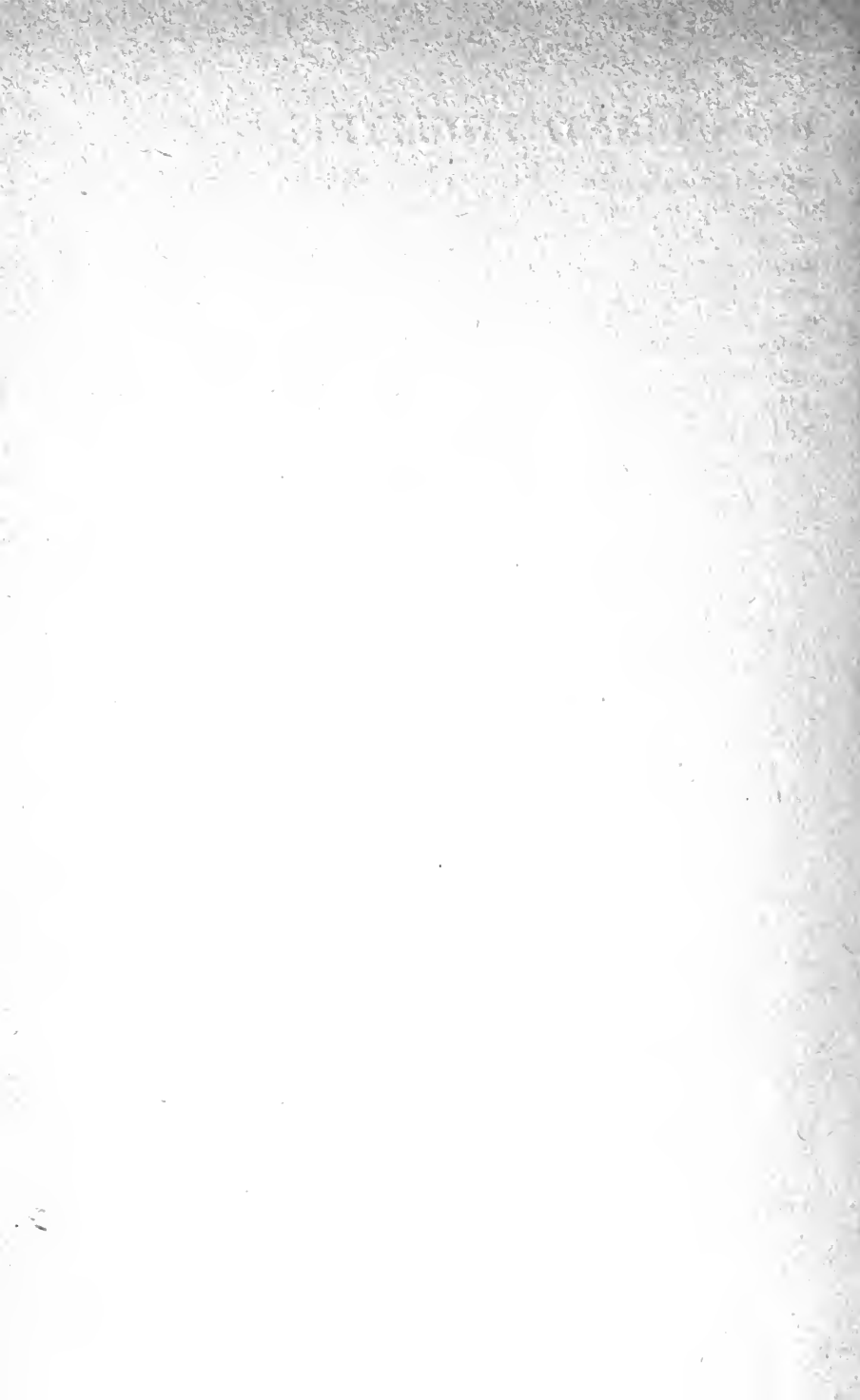
“ Your thoughts are sound, bold builders,
I am my father’s son.
Behold this home-shore, these our hills, this bay,
And this our slave !—
Up, work, look sharp about it ! ”
Bounding a foot and fast retiring from her,
I stoop for stones strewn thick about the sand,
Aim them, fling them,
And, as my idle arm resumes the knack,
Score a hit, and laugh
To see her stumble hurt behind the pine trunks.

“ Unless you work, I throw again !
To it and steady at it. !
Mark me, drab, we Camilli
Mean what we say.”
Stone after stone still flies,
But aimed to knock chips from the pine-boles now ;
For she is busy gathering sticks, increasing
Her distance as she may. The noon is sultry :
Heated and clammy, I,
Towards the live waves turning, slip my tunic,
Then run in naked.
Cooled and soothed by swimming,
Both mind and heart from their late tumult tuned
To placid acquiescent health,
I float, suspended in the limpid water,
Passive, rhythmically governed ;
So tranced worlds travel the dark shoreless ether.

“ Where should this stream of pictures tend ? ”
No, Bottomley, you will not ask ;
To you I am quite free to send
The unexpected, unexplained :
You will not take me thus to task.

So they be painted well, they live ;
If ill, they yet may cling to fame
Associated with your name.
In which case you, and not I, give
That we are both contented with.

BLIND THAMYRIS



BLIND THAMYRIS

Since my father was a hero and my mother a goddess of the woods, I was sent when twelve years old to the cave of Chiron, that he might instruct me in wisdom and valour. This life, divorced from all female tenderness, appealed to my pride, and only at night were my eyes ever moistened with regret. I was now free to follow a stream until, too weary to advance further, some cradle of scented herbs would lure me to rest and doze. At length twilight brought me an energy, winged with dread of the dusking forests, that carried me right home to the cavern. The sources were always my goal, the more easy descent seawards never tempted my morning moods : and, as he taught me the lyre or the control of my voice, Chiron remarked a similar preference for those words and cadences that lead the spirit away from the high-roads of thought and feeling. Surely emotions well up in the fastnesses of tranquillity, close under the blue and white of heaven, more virginal than can be experienced in lowland retreats ? As time wore on, Chiron, the daily lesson being ended, would speak to me of a rhapsodist, former pupil and great favourite of his. "Agenor," he began, "like thyself, Thamyris, was ever striving to reach the summits before joint and sinew were sufficiently tough. Alas, though he has often brought back with him the rarest strophes and melodies, men have refused to listen to them. They prefer a music that better harmonises with their garish sea-board towns, and he wanders shrouded in an ever deeper gloom." With a sigh he paused ; and I waited, expecting to be warned not thus to estrange myself from humanity by persistently climbing among the hills. But he seemed unable so to conclude ; and presently bid me run away and practise throwing the spear.

One forenoon when wind, so strong as to seem foreign to the settled brilliance of the weather, was bowing the fir trees, and now here, now there, their backs arched silverly, flashing like waves on the dark green ridges, while the sound was that of a chorus of Titans re-

joicing in violence (so much so that we had to retreat well back within the cave before we could hear ourselves play or sing),—Chiron broke off the lesson, still disturbed it may be by the hurly-burly without, though it strained but faintly through the stillness held under that roof of rock. He sat gazing forth into the sunny turbulence, so grandly though jaggedly framed ; and I, leaning back against his flank, watched his moved visage worn with much living. Then for the first time he began to recite me actual words of Thamyris, recalling how their public delivery had proved that those who thronged round the other rhapsodists would never collect about him.

“ Untouched white cloud,
Like a task acclaimed
When the heart is young,
Thou fliest higher
Than the eagle deed
That is praised by men.

Unheeded silence,
In the night or at noon,
Thou singest to the hilltops
A song that is richer
Than the tales of war
Which men crowd to hear.

Magnificent joys
Lie about like garments
Amazingly broidered ;
A god has discarded them
Before launching upward
In naked loneliness.

But no human hand
Lifts a single tunic ;
No man's heart prefigures
The deep satisfaction
Of moving vested
In the pictured raiment
That a god walked the earth in.”

Chiron was silent ; and I dreamed of finding and putting on the slough of Apollo. I saw myself in a sultry

glare climbing boulders with grey lichen-crusts cheeks and dark moss-bearded cavities down which I peered in hopes of finding a cupful of collected dew. At last I arrived on the crest: and there, at the bottom of a crater of wild tumbled blocks, lay gleaming somewhat silver and violet and blue. I scrambled down: a pattern of scaled serpents was looped inextricably all over white samite. I lifted it, and from the inside there slipped with a swish a body-vest of pale vermillion rippled with gold in a device of arrows, each drawn to the head in a sturdy bow; an armoury of the proper size for an host of mice had it been real instead of pictured. I gasped; and Chiron's eyes met mine, so that I blushed all down my neck.

Months later, on my return at dusk from a day's ramble, I learned from our new pupil, the little Achilles, that Chiron had been fetched away by two other centaurs, and expected to be absent all night, perhaps longer. We prepared and ate our supper of chestnuts, boiled and then mashed in milk, and were shortly rolled in separate bears' skins to sleep. Achilles, who was but just turned six, was soon off; but I lay hour after hour forecasting coming events with eyes wide open. I cannot now revive those dreamy adventures, and only recollect that Thamyras figured in no few; and how fevered I was by the thought that much sadness and disappointment lay in wait for me, so mysteriously like him. At last moonlight began to edge into the cave; travelling along the wall it soon lit up a trophy, the skull and huge hooped horns of an ibex; and next the rug made of four chamois hides that Chiron hangs over his flanks and crupper in winter, when round his bust he wraps thick folds of brown knitted wool; not long after it was bathing the ebony lyre inlaid with polished iridescent sea-shell that has both its fluted pillars and their screw-heads enamelled with lines of scarlet. This wonder Jason had brought back from Colchis and sent up by an embassy to Chiron. I rose, and stealing softly to it looked up, not at the well-loved colours of the lyre, but towards the tranquil effulgence that had woken

them out of the darkness, and was surprised to see that there were many swift-travelling clouds in the sky : for while I lay in the shelter the night had seemed quite still. At that moment the moon was covered, and the cave became so dark that I stepped outside and saw the moonlight fast growing again on the lawn lower down, where we throw the spear and wrestling matches take place. I hurried to meet it and, once there, the terror and attraction of the hills at night shook me ; for was I not brought forth by the regent of a bosky grove ? Though its sacred safety rustled leagues from where I stood, might I not brave those mountain forests, being able so to account for my hardihood ? I was carried away, neither walking nor running, but at a sort of shaken trot that seemed dictated by the thudding of my heart. The almost level path wound along our valley high above the torrent, which it would meet and cross some two miles deeper in this fold under Pelion. My limbs moved as it were unbidden ; once or twice I stopped and said " This is a dream," till the indescribable reality of everything drove me on. My teeth were frequently jolted, yet the cold did not seem intense enough to chatter them : and surely I was not abjectly frightened ? This notion roused my self-control and calmed me till I slipped along like a peaceful thought, unchallenged yet alert. The stream was crossed by the fallen fir-trunk, and the path returned eastward on the opposite side of the valley till the distant mouth of the cave was passed and the forefront of this new ridge won. Here the view was immense, embracing islands in the sea and snowy Olympus and the unnumbered chains of the mountainous coast. Here I squatted on the short fine turf and folded both arms across my knees as a cushion for my chin. Perhaps I dozed, for my head was heavy when I lifted it to make sure of a sound—the trampling of centaurs a great way off. " They are returning " I said to myself—and laid an ear against the earth, and then peered into the darkness ; for the moon lit nothing new except one band of sea far out behind the islands. All but certain by which

track they were coming, I plunged headlong downward through the brushwood as though it had been broad day, intending to cut their road on the moor above the cliffs. How many times I floundered into bushes or barked a shin against bough or boulder, those who have done such things may imagine. I at last stumbled out on the heather hundreds of feet beneath, limping but consoled to fancy my troubles ended. Before I had cleared a thousand yards I fell, ricking my ankle, and rose with difficulty : for an agony like death whenever my foot pressed the ground routed the very notion of an inexhaustible endurance latent within me. I fell again on to the thick springy couch of scented ling and soon felt deliciously relieved. Violent activity had chased the last vestige of night-terror, and the wind moaning round me made even that barren place homelike as with the movements of a familiar presence. The slightest jerk to my right foot, and immediately my brow was beaded with sweat ; for pain like a savage dog held my ankle in its jaws, and would grind them again if I stirred. Hooves thundered nearer and nearer : the noise so invaded my consciousness that to cry for help seemed as useless as to halloo against tempestuous breakers on a rocky shore, yet simultaneously there returned on me all that Chiron had taught of the diverse tribes of sound, —how some are irreconcilable while others easily agree, how the loudest of one family may fail to drown small ones of distinct origin, and in a continuous and familiar uproar their different calibre may startle even as in silence. Fed by these memories hope grew strong, and I cried out “Father Chiron, Father Chiron, I am here and must die if you do not come.” Then I listened : all was still. At first I feared they had reached the hills and entered the valley so that the sound of their trampling was walled off. Just then it began again slowly and unexpectedly near, so I shouted “Father Chiron, do not leave me to the wolves !” Then his voice answered, and tears streamed over my face and sobs so shook me that I could not make out his words : yet between the spasms I gasped “This way, this way !”

And he came and knelt beside me, first on his fore-knees, then settling down on his haunches gradually so as not to scare me by the blundering of his fetlocks. His large gentle hand felt my moist burning brow while I pointed at my helpless ankle : then he lifted it between thumb and finger and with the index of the other hand began to stroke the swelling thoughtfully. Then lifting his head he shouted, "Rhoetus, find me some sorrel or lettuce ; and if you see any straight wands cut me one or two. Catch ! here is my knife," and he slipped the thong by which it hung over his head. Now I must tell you it was a delicately smithied blade with both edges sharp, and lived, point foremost, in a snug trough cut along the yellow boxwood handle over which a lid of box was spliced, the open end being secured by a wedge of ebony attached by a thong. For use, the blade was first shaken out on the palm, then its heft-end replaced and secured by tapping the wedge with a stone. It was our great pleasure to borrow this knife and scratch lions or eagles upon a horn, or out of soft pine carve straight-robed Athena with casque and spear. I know every cut that defines her attitude, but can never give her features, either terrible or beautiful. But Chiron was repeating to me "Did not Achilles tell you that I could not be back before morning ?" for my mind had suddenly wandered to my foster-mother's farm kitchen in the lowlands forty miles away. "Yes, he told me ; but I could not sleep and at last I wanted to explore the woods by moonlight : after I heard you coming, in running I caught my foot in the twisted trunks of this heather." With a low husky chuckle he said "Though I am supposed to be really wise, the simplicity of your story abashes me ; for I have harboured sinister forebodings." I had no inkling then how he dreaded lest the violence of centaur-herds and the knavery of townsmen, like clashing flints, should cause a conflagration. For ever more pressingly he forebodes the violation of his cavern's peace, the only spot left where men and centaurs foregather kindly. At that time I attributed his words to the ocean of his wisdom, which, like a

shore-bred child, I was accustomed to hear murmur, content if now and again the beauty of a thought meant for me stranded like a dainty shell at my feet. Hitherto I had lain like one bed-ridden, haunted by the seriousness of that pain ; but now, sitting up, I dared to show a curiosity which every endeavour would have suppressed had my right ankle been as sound as the left, and asked " Where have you been, Father Chiron ? " His husky laugh allowed the indulgence I had claimed, and his voice grew strained as he answered " I was called to the death-bed of my best-beloved son Thamyris. " " Is he very sick ? " I asked. " Not now, for he moaned me his last epode and ended like the swan. " At that I lay back once more and looked across the heather at the moon, unwilling to embarrass his sorrow by staring at it. And after a pause Chiron in a very low voice began to croon :

Falcon daughters of Apollo
Ye spur on a man to sing,—
Rend with pangs sharp as a sword :
Then for his best award
Faint praise and a broken wing.

Is it for larks to follow
The snow-feathered cloud ?
They are dusky and hot and fragile
And scarcely contain a proud
Insanely throbbing heart :
Ye are amber-eyed, sleek and agile
Taloned and savagely smart.

When the fierce blood bursts our pulses,
Darkened like Hades at noon
There falls from the towering ether
A mangled mass of feather.

An end to the pain that convulses
Life with ambition is boon
Enough for a soul uplifted,
And by each of you severally gifted.

When silence had nursed the memory of this for a space I glanced at Chiron : his wet eyes stared steadily

at the moon. He roused himself and began to shout to hasten Rhœtus, and the young centaur soon approached, bounding wildly, a mat of tresses flapping like a black flag about his head. Chiron took the knife, the leaves and the two sallows, and measuring these last against my leg cut two wands from their stouter ends, split them and placed their flat sides against the leaves in which he packed my tender joint. He next cut strands from under his white beard as long as his arm : with one he bound the splints lightly round my calf and with the other secured them beneath my foot. Rising, he helped me up, and warned me not to put any weight on the cage which lengthened and imprisoned my leg. He then signed to Rhœtus to lift me on his back, and side by side the two began walking across the heath ; the sky was once more almost clear and the moon was setting. The sea, although it could be heard, was hidden by the heathery hillocks which thatched its cliffs, as Olympus and the great ranges were behind hills tawny and russet with beech and alder, but hooded in evergreen firs that towered dead black in the moonlight. A whistle sounded : and there was Caudon waiting three hundred paces off. Rhœtus advanced, crying to him " It is my turn to carry the body now," but his piebald fellow immediately heaved something on to his shoulder and set off at a gallop. " What is it ? " I said to Chiron, round whose vast waist my arms clung. " They shame our breed " he replied. " Ghosts of the dead never haunt centaurs ; so for them the lifeless body is no more than an empty smock. Men are born with older fears and cradled in whispering awe. Reverence is thus taught them, first by terror, and then by esteem, if they consort with finely tempered minds. But these rough colts, deprived of the first, scarce heed the second lesson yet. —Poor Thamyris ! the fair course of thy days was driven about till, willy-nilly, it clashed with the coarse-grained crowd : and must thy body be tossed, fought for and whirled away in the fury of this boisterous rivalry ? " They were fetching wide curves across the heath ; sometimes even Caudon's piebald flanks were lost in the

darkness, and they became a mere chivy of distancing sounds: then again both toiled on the skyline above the cliffs, like shadows on a wall. Their shouts had at first betokened no more than horse-play, but took now an angrier accent. Chiron smartened his pace and I felt that his spirit was chafing: and when they next drew within earshot, he shouted stern commands that they were not so unbridled as to flout, but came severally, muttering, heated and resentful towards us. The old centaur reproached them for thus jolting the body of his friend. "But he feels nothing," argued Caudon.—"Well, well, had he been a skin of choice wine, you should have carried him with more care."—"Wine can be spoilt with shaking—but a corpse!" grumbled Rhoetus. "Still for all he once was. . . ."—"Why, he was so mad as to put out his own eyes!" grunted Caudon, and Rhoetus continued "They say he died because he refused to eat in a rage that outlasted his life."—"Yet I, who am old enough to be your sire's grandsire, have often wished the hour stayed when his fingers wandered the strings."—"Years ago!" they interjected.—"Last evening he kissed my hands and taught me words that fly straight to the heart." Neither colt retorted, and the silence seemed so consecrated to the gravity of the wise Chiron's sorrow that I feared to break it, though devoured with curiosity about his unaccountable madness, blindness, and death. We had entered the valley and were climbing at a foot-pace among the trees. Though the moon had set, the sky had not darkened but greyed with the dawn. As the light increased the body absorbed my attention; it hung wrapped in a coarse and torn cloak over Rhoetus' shoulder; for Caudon had ceded it to him soon after they left arguing with Chiron. The arms dangled along his muscular back and the dead hands flopped and turned upon the glossy black hide to which his brown skin gave place below the loins. They went a little in advance of us, and at times I could divine just how the head hung, by some yellow hair that appeared and disappeared behind a rent in the cloak, which swaying, opened and closed like the ill-

hinged door of a granary loft that, swinging in the wind, shows the gleam of golden grain to a mid-winter day. My head had dropped in a doze, before we reached the place where a path branches down to the bathing pool : and Chiron bade Rhoetus and Caudon carry the body up to the cave, build a fire, and seethe meat, for all would be more than common hungry. But me he carried down to the large pool that spreads out from the foot of a fall in the torrent ; and at the outer brim of this basin, where the clear water becomes shallow and escapes in many minor cascades downwards, he chose a bank of sward and laid me gently down where the water would flow over my damaged foot. While I lounged at ease he himself gravely walked down under the pool ; the water rose above the horse and only the man remained : still he trod carefully deeper, the white stones being often slippery with green weed ; and now his beard and hair were floating like foam about his shoulders, as though a smaller column of invisible water were drilling the quivering surface right out in front of the torrent that thundered into boiling suds at the foot of the dripping rocks. Still his hooves felt their way down, till the billowy outward curves were sweeping right over his head. The white limestone lit up the depths and rendered his figure clearly visible though it seemed strangely stunted : his chestnut crupper, silvered as it was with age, became violet from contrast with the icy blue water. All around thinned boughs hung out long yellow leaves, and the reflections of some of them flickered like fish about him. Time seemed to have ceased, and all hostile conditions to be suspended in favour of this magnificently weathered creature, that he might become divinely amphibious and death stand disarmed before him. Far above, a level shaft of sunlight from over the mountain shoulder suddenly caught the tree-tops. A naked scaffold of dark trunk, bough, and intricately forking branch sustained each thin tower-like tent of brilliant leaves. Thus, their grand swelling shapes hollow instead of dense with foliage, tanned or yellow instead of green, these chestnuts whose

flaunting camps reach far up the valleys made a last stand against the disenchanting season of storms. The banks beneath were thick with fallen leaves interspersed with clusters of nuts like hedgehogs. The whole vividly coloured scene swam in the limpid transparent slumber which tuned my breathing though it had not closed my eyes. I thought "He will stay under too long and I shall never hear how poor Thamyris went mad," yet it seemed acceptable or at least necessary that I should never hear and that he should remain immersed for ever. No : he lifted his head and parted his hair and rubbed his eyes, and came up as slowly and solemnly out of the pool as he had descended into it. Streaming and refreshed he cantered round its shallow brim, splashing with his hooves ; he shook and wrung from hair and beard streamers of diamond drops, quivering the while the glossy coat of his nether body to free its shaggy skirts, and whisking his tail against his hocks. Pausing beside me he smiled into my sleepy eyes and said "How goes the ankle ?" I murmured that it was so cold as to have stopped aching and I could not now feel whether it were there or not. He drew me a little higher up till my bandaged foot was out of the numbing flow. Roused by this I could no longer refrain from asking what had driven poor Thamyris mad ; and the answer came, soothing the terror that it stirred in my soul by the grave compassion with which it was pronounced. "He could not endure to watch those whose attention he had in vain tried to capture, grouped about some common rhapsodist who, with shouts, recounted how one man killed another in some freebooting foray. He must have wandered unwanted and uninspired for months before ; at last he stood near the ships where fishermen had been chipping holes in large flints in order to thread them along the bottom of their great sweep-net. These had often split before they were pierced, and fragments with knife-like edges lay all about. Suddenly dashing down his lyre, he stooped, and seized two sharp pieces ; and sobbing out that his eyes should never again watch a crowd like that gaping upon the wharf at this bawler,

he jabbed at his eyes. Others told me how they heard him, and turned to see blood streaming from his face and beard and from the two red hands that he waved as he staggered, unaccustomed to darkness. They thought some goddess in the shape of a sea-hawk must have struck him with her beak, and vanished as swiftly as she had come through the twilight. Afterward, when his broken lyre was found, they concluded that the Muses had sent her because he, though a mere mortal, sang such songs as might in the halls of Olympus be preferred to their own ; for only among the gods, as those fishermen fancied, could he have found suitable audience. They led him to the temple of Apollo : there the priest killed a snake and bound its body across his bleeding orbits, and the wounds healed but sight did not return. Afterwards when he felt how he never knew where he was or who was near—when no one could lead him far towards the stony peaks he loved, for dread always overtook them at the danger of steep places for a blind man whose daimon left him totally unwarned—he refused food and sat all day on the temple steps, and never begged an alms or stooped to gather what was thrown him. At night the hierodules had sometimes heard him mutter as though he prayed for vengeance. They even believed that he had challenged the nine Muses to a trial of skill, offering to yield body and mind to their displeasure if he failed, but should he out-sing them, then each of them was to submit her body to bear him a child. For servile minds, Agenor, ascribe the motives familiar to themselves to those whose outstanding actions they must perforce canvass. Thus he endured not only perpetual darkness, but companionless solitude where streams of men were constantly passing ; hearing voices but not one conversable. Then when death first warned him, he sent a message to me ; this was delivered to Rhoetus and Caudon, who bore it upon the shoulders of Pelion.” And gazing round, he continued “ In this spot shall he rest, screened by these chestnuts from the cruel noons of summer : here shall a grave be dug. The distance from the cave is convenient, and bathers may

often consent to remain while I re-chant one of his lays, till, departing, they breathe a pious wish for the peace of him whose life was full of strife and storms, though he never joined in battle, or trod the planks of a ship. When I stood by his side he said ' O god-like beast, no other ears ever listened to me with pleasure as thine did. Thou hast been rewarded with extended life, for thy actions and customs are swayed neither by fear nor by greed ; but in the eyes of the young and in quiet haunts thou hast sought the wisdom most easily wed to divine melodies. Thou wilt understand and perhaps pity these strophes born of my anguish.' His fevered reveries would seem so to have exalted me that he used an address such as gods expect, and with the same trance-like utterance feebly and slowly delivered the hymn I repeated to you on the heath, but then the end came. Now you had better lie here for to-day lest you should jar that ankle, and I will send Achilles to you with some meat." I wondered over all I had heard, not without dread of a similar fate, till Achilles came and wanted to know what I had seen in the night, whether nymphs or daimons or Artemis herself. As I ate the warm meat or broke the brown crusts between sips of wine, I told him. Then with all the roguish effrontery of his beauty, shaking his long yellow curls, he laughed " I should have done as you did for all the rest, Agenor, but I should not have sprained my ankle," and he danced off singing " No, indeed, indeed no ! " while I, dropping the drained horn into the empty maple bowl, rolled over and slept.

When I woke the sun had passed the meridian, and the sound of a spade and the thud of falling clods could be heard, and looking across I saw Caudon working in a grave on a crest of the opposite bank ; soon the blade rang on the rock, and his action became that of shovelling out the loam. Next, Chiron and Rhoetus arrived, carrying the body between them wound in a long and splendid pall. This had been sent by Thetis as a present with Achilles when he joined us in July. It measured

six yards by four, and might have served for a temple curtain or to drape a royal bed. The goddess herself had worked it far out under the sea, aided by the silver-shoed daughters of Doris. Flying over a ground of deep blue were seen harpies with black wings spread and every feather tipped with white, their brown bodies shaped like large eggs ; they wore coral necklaces, and had the heads of women with singing mouths and long streaming raven curls. Yet they were armless and had the legs and talons of a bird. Each of the score was exactly like every other, and side by side and one after another they flew across the deep noon sky. So they sweep by close above some ship, with sweet voices advising mariners of a greater glory a-mid-ocean than where sails are often met round the coast, though well they know that from the vacant, unislanded main few venturers have ever returned. Chiron had no use in his cavern for a cloth so splendid : and he had determined to devote this to the honour of Thamyris. They laid his body, wholly enveloped in it, along the turf beside the grave, while they spread in it the autumn-tinted bracken that Achilles had been cutting with a sickle, and, armful after armful, had made a mountainous heap of. Next they lowered him in the great blue cloth on to that sun-saturated couch. Then Chiron took his lyre and sang :—

A gentle spring was that long past
Which brought thee to my cave ;
For thought yet more than action brave,
O daring spirit, now thou hast
Gleaned all that feeble mortals give
To those in whom intenser joy has sought to live !
Here woodland peace broods ever, here
Shall water alway carol in thine ear.

Caudon and Rhœtus now chanted the usual chorus of “ Last Farewell,” Achilles and myself piping in as well as their loud voices would let us. The rest of the bracken was then thrown down and on that the dark loam, the turfs were replaced, wine spilled in libation and grain strewn. The rites were ended : the two centaurs shouldered spade and mattock and clattered off.

Achilles asked if he might go into the woods with his bow and arrow to shoot something. Chiron nodded consent and came to examine my ankle. While he uncased it and did it up again with fresh leaves, I asked why, if Thamyris so loved the lonely hills and scorned men, he was so angry at seeing them crowd about other rhapsodists. When he had finished with my foot he replied: "One of our friend's hymns is now trotting in my head," then touching his lyre he chanted:

From the west upward
I toiled heavy-hearted;
From the east joyous,
Poising his weight on
An arching instep,
Came man to meet me.

And high in the azure,
Where the rocks ended
We sat down, friends.
He heard there how often
Was said, shown or felt
The thing that rebuked me;
Then laughed and pretended
That what the hand fashioned,
House, sword or dead body,
Alone remained;
Thoughts and intentions
Lost their existence.

His glad voice inveigled
Belief from my candour;
And lo! he was gone.
Poising my weight on
An arching instep
Down I came, gaily
Facing the sunset,
As though in the sea-port
That glittered beneath it
I had not yet smitten
The sonorous lyre.
As though the folk there

Had come from the eastward
That very morning
And found empty houses
And ships abandoned
Needing only to be cleaned and re-painted,
And meant to make them gay as spring flowers,
And were sure in the twilight
To gather about me.

There, that is his own answer to your question. I do not think he craved just *any* praise, nor did he much over-prize his own gift ; and you see he was not thinking of this coast, but of one facing the other way, so that the poet could arrive from the quarter opposite to the sun and meet him at noon on the peak. As much as to say "Not myself, nor this town's people ; but any place, any people, any poet." He worshipped man, and it angered him to see homespun preferred to the skyey fabric the god had helped him weave. He regretted his violence and could not live without those eyes it had cost him." Having drawn these sentences one by one from his sad heart Chiron lapsed into silence, till I asked "But why did he address the Muses as enemies in his last hymn, if what the folk said was quite false ?"—"It is strange ! Can they have appeared to him smartly fledged in white plumage, with dapper tail and wings and vulture heart ? Stately women clothed in daffodil chitons delighted my gaze the only time I ever had a glimpse of them."—"When was that ?"—"I was scarcely older than yourself, and woke in a cave to see them sitting and resting at its mouth, delicately grouped against the dawn. I remember Euterpe's lap full of flowers, and Melpomene ; for her hair was stormy, black and unbound, and a deep brown cloak had slipped from her shoulders but still hung over her elbows : it was only afterwards that I regretted not having noted the features of Urania, but assuredly no single one of them had the eye of an hawk. They rose as I woke, and strolled on. I crept after them, but when I turned the buttress of rock, no glad-robed figure was in sight though it seemed that choral voices floated in the air ;

yet soon I found myself listening to silence, so could not be sure.”—“It must be sad to sing unpraised, however beautiful the words.”—“Yes, boy, and the ecstasy that sings is counterfaced with a destroying rage : that is perhaps why his darkened soul figured the Muses as birds of prey.”—“Do you know any more of his rhapsodies ? ”—“Perhaps I can recall another ” and he struck some strange bell-like notes and then sang :—

Leap, Ibex, leap : the drop
From that mountain turret top
Is sheer two hundred feet !
Crash head foremost to the rock ;
Those massive hoops, thy curved horns, take the shock
And throw thee up ! Albeit
Tossed by their supple springs,
Without the help of wings,
Scarcely may eye believe
Thou hast righted in the air !
Rashness thou dost retrieve ;
Whence thou wast bounced, even there
Arrivest without let ;
Four sturdy hooves of jet
Plant thee on the slab thine eye
Had chosen from on high.

So melodist that haunts
The spirit-firing peaks,
And deep in azure chants,
Must take like dizzy leap
Back to some sea-board town
To find the praise he seeks.

And would he still his fervour keep,
As fine resilience will he need
So featly to light down,
Hoop-hornèd Goat, as thine,
By chamois herds acclaimed divine !

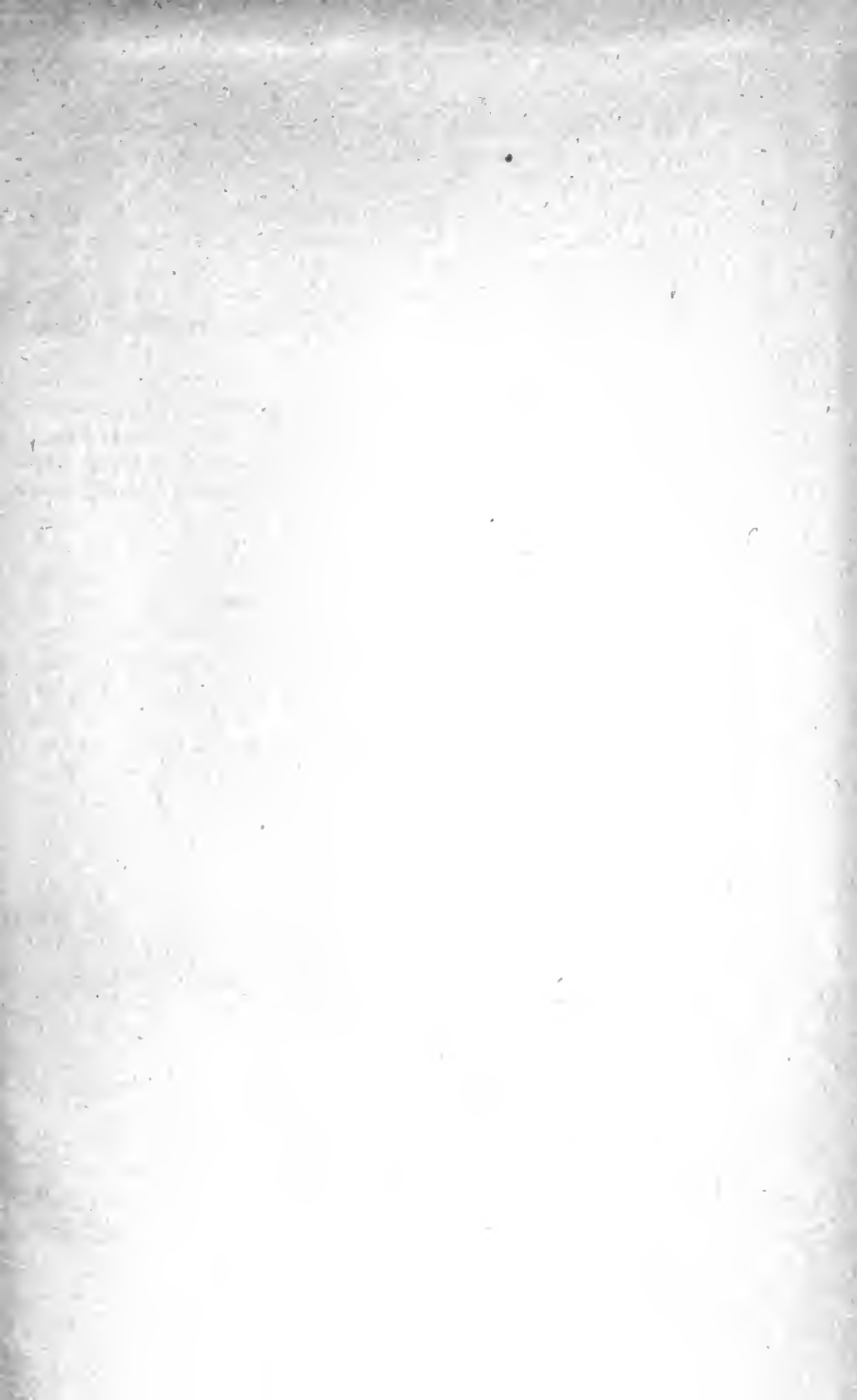
A god's grace truly will he need
If he be not to suffer, not to bleed—
A shattered heart and brain a-fire,
A trodden mantle and snapt lyre !

And how by headlong rapture whirled and blinded
Should he know where 'tis won or how to find it ?—
That unpredictable address
Whose magic cleaves the rough quartz stone
And makes its secret crystals known
When the most boorish bless
The most divine
And flash back to their eyes the grace by which they
shine !

This history has been written with Chiron's help, who says we have often found more appropriate words than were actually used, yet have not departed from truth as Clio bestows it on those who do her unfeigned reverence.

* * * * *

I covered this sheepskin years ago in the cave and have kept it ever since : now I must soon bequeath it to the care of others. Achilles and Chiron are both long since dead, and who wants to hear the lays of Thamyris now ? I never picked up the slough of any god ; though a bit later, when my foot was sufficiently healed for me to limp about, I found behind some bushes where Caudon or Rhoetus had chucked it the filthy ragged homespun mantle of Thamyris ; for when I spread it out one could see where the blood had run down from his eyes by the dark stains. I folded it and laid it at the foot of his grave and raised a pyramid of stones over it, bringing them toilsomely from the pool each day as my ankle grew stronger,—even as in two or three years' time I was adding crooked letter to crooked letter on the inside of this skin that Thamyris might be remembered. And as I wrote I was persuaded, in spite of Chiron's presentiment and that vivid dream of a white chlamys brodered over with blue, violet and silver serpents, that such " magnificent joys " would never be mine. Which secret conviction, as I grew a beard and it grew grey, has been proved correct. Mæonides, best loved of all rhapsodists, may have found it : though when I heard him chant the war for Troy, he also was dressed in homespun and already blind ; but old Agenor has kept his two eyes as safely as this sheepskin.



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